

ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

By THEODORE SCHROEDER

In the American Historical Magazine, Theodore Schroeder, a former Salt Lake, contributes an interesting article on the origin of the Book of Mormon. The first installment was printed in The Tribune of December 1. The second one follows:

From Spaulding to Rigdon.

When we digress from the main lines of our argument, Spaulding's rewritten story had been traced into the hands of Robert Patterson, a Pittsburg publisher, and this prior to Spaulding's death in October, 1816. If the manuscript was never returned to Spaulding after its second submission to Patterson, then what became of it? John Miller, who knew Spaulding at Amity, bailed him out of jail when confined for debt, made his coffin for him, and helped lay him in his grave, says Spaulding told him "there was a man named Sidney Rigdon about the office (of Patterson), and they thought he had stolen it" (the manuscript) (45).

The Rev. Cephus Dodd, a Presbyterian minister of Amity, Pa., as well as a practicing physician, attended Spaulding at his last sickness. As early as 1822, when Mormonism was first attracting general public attention, and two years prior to the publication of Howe's book, in which Spaulding's story was first ventilated, this Mr. Dodd took Mr. George M. French of Amity to Spaulding's grave, and there expressed a positive belief that Sidney Rigdon was the agent who had transformed Spaulding's manuscript into the Book of Mormon. The date is fixed by Mr. French through its proximity to his removal to Amity; hence the date given is probably correct (46).

The conclusion thus expressed by Mr. Dodd in advance of all public discussion or evidence is important, because of what is necessarily implied in it. First, it involved a comparison between Spaulding's literary production and the Book of Mormon, with a discovered similarity inducing conviction that the latter was a plagiarism from the former. This comparison presupposes a knowledge of the contents of Spaulding's rewritten manuscript. The second and most important deduction is to be made from the assertion that Sidney Rigdon was the connecting link in the plagiarism. Such a conclusion must have had a foundation in Mr. Dodd's mind, and could have arisen only if he was possessed of personal knowledge of what he considered reliable information creating a conviction in his mind of the probability of Sidney Rigdon's connection with the matter. This conclusion, if not made on independent evidence, in all human probability had no less significant foundation than a confidence in the accuracy of Spaulding's expressed suspicion to the effect that Rigdon had stolen the manuscript from the printing office. Thus accounted for, Dr. Dodd's statement has less force than if presumed to have been made on independent evidence, yet it confirms Joseph Miller's statement that Spaulding suspected Rigdon, and that suspicion must be accounted for by those who deny Rigdon's presence in Pittsburg prior to 1821.

How About Sidney Rigdon?

Was Spaulding's expressed suspicion that Rigdon had stolen his manuscript from the printing office well founded? We can never know upon what evidence the accusation was made, but we may inquire into the probative force of such new corroborative evidence as has been adduced since Spaulding's death. Sidney Rigdon was born February 19, 1793, in Pine Fork of Peter's Creek, Saint Clair township, Allegheny county, Pa. (47) which place is variously estimated at from six to twelve miles distant from Pittsburg. At least until 1819, that being the date of the death of his father, and his own 18th year, Rigdon remained on the farm with his parents (48).

According to the Mormon account, Rigdon was licensed as a Baptist preacher fourteen years before becoming a Mormon (49). This would make the date 1816, the same year in October of which Spaulding died, it being Rigdon's 24th year, and the same year in which he stole from the publishing office of Patterson the manuscript of Spaulding, if the latter's suspicions shall prove well founded. A very opportune time, be it observed, for the giving of attention to religious subjects.

According to another account, and perhaps the more accurate one, Rigdon joined the Baptist church May 31, 1817, (50) a Welsh clergyman, Rev. David Phillips, being his pastor (51). This church was located near where the neighboring hamlet of Liberty is now situated. Rigdon "began to talk in public on religion soon after his admission to the church, probably at his own instance, as there is no record of his license" (52).

The following year (1818) Rigdon left the farm and took up his residence and the study of divinity with the Rev. Andrew Clark at Sharon, Beaver county, Pa., (53) where, in March, 1819, he was licensed as a Baptist (54). I am informed by Sidney Rigdon's son that in 1818 his father made a lengthy visit to Pittsburg. In May, 1819, Rigdon moved to Warren, Trumbull county, O., where, in July, he took up his resi-

dence with the Rev. Adamson Bentley, late of "disciple" fame (55), and was here ordained a regular Baptist preacher (56). While thus situated Rigdon met, and on June 12, 1820, married Phoebe Brook (57), who was a sister to Mrs. Bentley (58). Rigdon continued his preaching hereabouts, not appearing to have any regular charge until February, 1822. In November, 1821, he received a call from the First Baptist church of Pittsburg, which was accepted, active duties commencing February, 1822, (59) and according to Joseph Smith ended August, 1824, at which time Rigdon was expelled for doctrinal error (60). Another account fixes the date of his being deposed as October 11, 1823 (61). Thereupon Rigdon, Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott organized the "Christian church," otherwise known as "Disciples"—and, with his following, Rigdon secured the courthouse in Pittsburg in which to do his preaching, at the same time working as a journeyman tanner (62) with his brother-in-law, Mr. Brooks (63). Mr. Lambdin, through whom Rigdon is supposed to have secured access to the Spaulding manuscript, and of whom more shall be written later on, died August 1, 1825, (64) and in 1826 Rigdon returned to Bainbridge, Geauga county, O. (65). Here he soon met Orson Hyde, who became a student of divinity at Mr. Rigdon's, with a view, as Hyde says, of entering the ministry. Except for a little "Campbellite" preaching which he did under Rigdon's guidance, Hyde never appears to have entered any ministry except the Mormon. In 1829 Hyde became a boarder in Rigdon's family, and in 1830 (66) he was almost miraculously converted to Mormonism, and still later became one of the first "quorum" of apostles in the Mormon church. Rigdon died July 14, 1876 (67).

Rigdon's Prior Religious Dishonesty.

There are two circumstances of the above narrative which need a little further elucidation, since the impressions which Rigdon made upon his discerning intimates during his earlier life may have some bearing upon the force to be given to the circumstantial evidence concerning his after life. As to Rigdon's conversion to the Baptist church so very soon after the time when Spaulding expressed the suspicion that Rigdon had stolen his manuscript, the Rev. Samuel Williams, in his "Mormonism Exposed," says: "He (Rigdon) professed to experience a change of heart when a young man, and proposed to join the church under the care of Elder David Phillips. But there was so much miracle about his conversion, and so much parade about his profession, that the pious and discerning pastor entertained serious doubts at the time in regard to the genuineness of the work. He was received, however, by the church and baptized by the pastor with some fears and doubts upon his mind. Very soon, Diotrophes-like, he began to put himself forward and seek pre-eminence, and was well-nigh supplanting the tired and faithful minister who had reared and nursed and led the church for a long series of years. So thoroughly convinced was Father Phillips by this time that he was not possessed of the spirit of Christ, notwithstanding his miraculous conversion and flippant speech, that he declared his belief 'that as long as he (Sidney Rigdon) should live, he would be a curse to the church of Christ'" (68).

Concerning Rigdon's expulsion or resignation from the Baptist church, the Mormons declare that it was caused by Rigdon's refusal to either accept or teach the doctrine of infant damnation. Dr. Winter, in the course of a historical notice of the First Baptist church of Pittsburg, says: "When Holland Sumner dealt with Rigdon for his bad teachings, and said to him: 'Brother Rigdon, you never got into a Baptist church without relating your Christian experiences,' Rigdon replied: 'When I joined the church at Peter's Creek I knew I could not be admitted without an experience, so I made up one to suit the purpose; but it was all made up and was of no use, nor true.' This I have just copied from an old memorandum as taken from Sumner himself" (69).

The first of these accounts was published in 1842, the last in January, 1875, and Rigdon lived until July 14, 1876. While one H. A. Dunlavy of Lebanon, O., did, in the March number of the same paper, publish an apology for Rigdon by way of answer to the article of Dr. Winter, yet neither Dunlavy nor Rigdon ever denied the facts alleged therein. We must, therefore, accept the facts stated as true, and they fasten upon Rigdon such religious dishonesty as establishes his willingness to be a party to a religious fraud in kind like the one here charged against him.

This, then, brings us to the question of what, if any, opportunity Rigdon had for stealing Spaulding's manuscript from Patterson's publishing office.

Rigdon Had Opportunity to Steal the Manuscript.

It has been frequently charged that Sidney Rigdon lived in Pittsburg and was connected with the Patterson print-

ing office during 1815 and 1816. To this charge Rigdon, under date Commerce (Ill.), May 27, 1839, makes the following denial:

It is only necessary to say in relation to the whole story about Spaulding's writings being in the hands of Mr. Patterson, who was then in Pittsburg, and who is said to have kept a private printing office, and my saying that I was connected with the same office, etc., etc., in the most base of lies, without even the shadow of truth. There was no man by the name of Patterson during my residence in Pittsburg who had a printing office; what might have been before I lived there, I know not. Mr. Robert Patterson, I was told, had owned a printing office before I lived in that city, but had been unfortunate in business and failed before my residence in Pittsburg. This Mr. Patterson, who was a Presbyterian preacher, I had a very slight acquaintance with during my residence there. He was then acting under an agency in the book and stationery business, and was the owner of no property of any kind, printing office, or anything else during the time I resided in that city. If I were to say that I ever heard of the Rev. Solomon Spaulding and his hopeful wife until Dr. P. Horburt wrote his lie about me, I should be a liar like unto themselves.

The evidence upon which is based the charge of Rigdon having a permanent residence in Pittsburg during the years in question, or his connection with Patterson's printing office, is so unsatisfactory that these issues must be found in favor of Rigdon's denial, even in spite of the conclusion as to his guilt, which is to be hereafter set forth, and his personal interest.

Rigdon, it will be remembered, lived within from six to ten miles of Pittsburg during the years in question. Pittsburg was the only town of consequence, and the family's place of buying and selling. Rigdon would of necessity make many friends in the city, and it would not be strange if almost everybody knew him and he knew all of the prominent citizens. In 1810 Pittsburg had only about 4000 inhabitants, and in 1820 had but 7248. The very prevalent notion as to Rigdon's connection with the Patterson publishing establishment must have had some origin, which, in all probability, would be Rigdon's close friendship for some who were, in fact, connected with it. Upon this theory only can we account for such a general impression (71).

It might be well, before entering upon that subject, to fix in our minds Patterson's business mutations. In 1812 Patterson was in the book business in the firm of Patterson & Hopkins. They had then in their employ one J. Harrison Lambdin, he being a lad of 14. January 1, 1818, Lambdin was taken into the partnership of Patterson & Lambdin, which firm succeeded R. and J. Patterson. R. Patterson had in his employ one Silas Engles as foreman printer and superintendent of the printing business. As such, the latter decided upon the propriety, or otherwise, of publishing manuscripts when offered. The partnership of Patterson & Lambdin "had under its control the book store on Fourth street, a book bindery, a printing office (not newspaper, but job office, under the name of Buttler & Lambdin), entrance in Diamond alley, and a steam paper mill on the Allegheny (under the name of R. and J. Patterson)" (72). Patterson & Lambdin continued in business until 1823. Lambdin died August 1, 1825, in his 27th year. Silas Engles died July 17, 1827, in his 46th year. R. Patterson died September 5, 1854, in his 82nd year (73).

Rigdon's Only Denial Analyzed.

Let us now analyze Mr. Rigdon's denial of 1839 as quoted above. Rigdon was an educated man, a controversialist in religion, and at the date of the denial he was also a lawyer. Therefore we are justified in holding him in a strict accountability for all that is necessarily implied from what he says or omits to say, as we could not, in justice, do with a layman.

Rigdon's first denial is of the "Story about Spaulding's writings being in the hands of Patterson." This story is established by the evidence already adduced and some besides, even to the satisfaction of most Mormons.

The negative of this proposition Mr. Rigdon, if he was a stranger to the office, as is claimed, could not possibly assert as a matter within his own knowledge. If Rigdon had in his mind any fact upon which he justified this assertion, it could only have been a knowledge that the manuscript was at the printing office of Buttler & Lambdin, not knowing that that office was controlled by Patterson.

The second denial in Rigdon's statement is: "There was no man by the name of Patterson during my residence in Pittsburg who had a printing office." The foregoing account of Patterson's business affairs is made up from the information possessed by Patterson's family and an employee. It must, therefore, be accepted as correct. Here again Rigdon's denial can be accounted for by assuming his ignorance of Patterson's interest in the printing office known as Buttler & Lambdin. Rigdon's son says Rigdon lived in Pittsburg in 1818. Church biographers allege that he preached there regularly after January 28, 1822. During 1818 and 1822 Patterson was in the printing

business, and Rigdon's statement must be deemed untrue.

Howe, in his "Mormonism Unveiled" (74), did, as early as 1834, charge that Rigdon had been "on intimate terms" with Lambdin. This statement in many forms has been very often republished since, and between 1834 and 1876, the year of Rigdon's death. During these forty-two years Rigdon never recorded a denial. That fact may, therefore, be taken as true. If Rigdon was on terms of intimacy with Lambdin, and Lambdin, at the time of that intimacy, as is clearly established and undeniable, was connected with Patterson in the publishing business, Rigdon, being intimate with him, must have known something of Patterson's business, and assuming his mental faculties unimpaired, he, in the statement under consideration, must have told what he knew was untrue, justifying himself by the apparent evidence in his favor that Patterson's printing office was not run in his own name.

Rigdon's third matter of denial relates to his own admission of a connection with Patterson's printing establishment. This denial we must accept as true, since no one to whom he is alleged to have made the admission has ever recorded his evidence, and the hearsay statements without certainty of origin are too indefinite to be entitled to weight.

This paragraph above quoted and thus analyzed absolutely denies nothing in the remotest degree essential to the real issues involved in the charge of plagiarism under investigation, and is absolutely the only recorded public denial ever made by Rigdon, though from 1834 to 1876 he was almost continually under the fire of this charge, reiterated in various forms and with varying proofs.

Rigdon and Lambdin in 1815.

Heretofore we have argued that by his silence Rigdon admitted his intimacy with Lambdin, (who was) successively Patterson's employee and partner from 1812 to 1823. The early writers all treated the intimacy between Rigdon and Lambdin as a matter apparently too well known to need proof. Yet we need not rely upon that, nor even Rigdon's failure to deny, since more definite evidence has been preserved.

Mrs. R. J. Eichbaum, under date of Pittsburg, September 18, 1879, leaves us this very convincing statement:

My father, John Johnston, was postmaster at Pittsburg for about eighteen years, from 1804 to 1822. My husband, William Eichbaum, succeeded him, and was postmaster for about eleven years, from 1822 to 1833. I was born August 25, 1792, and when I became old enough I assisted my father in attending to the postoffice, and became familiar with his duties. From 1811 to 1816 I was the regular clerk in the office, sorting, making up, dispatching, opening, and distributing the mails. Pittsburg was then a small town, and I was well acquainted with all the stated visitors at the office who called regularly for their mails. So meager at that time were the mails that I could generally tell without looking whether or not there was anything for such persons, though I would usually look in order to satisfy them. I was married in 1815, and the next year my connection with the office ceased, except during the absence of my husband. I knew and distinctly remember Robert and Joseph Patterson, J. Harrison Lambdin, Silas Engles and Sidney Rigdon. I remember Rev. Mr. Spaulding, but simply as one who occasionally called to inquire for letters. I remember there was an evident intimacy between Lambdin and Rigdon. They very often came to the office together. I particularly remember that they would thus come during the hour on Sabbath afternoon when the office was required to be open, and I remember feeling sure that Rev. Mr. Patterson knew nothing of this, or he would have put a stop to it. I do not know what position, if any, Rigdon filled in Patterson's store or printing office, but am well assured he was frequently, if not constantly, there for a large part of the time when I was clerk in the postoffice. I recall Mr. Engles saying that "Rigdon was always hanging around the printing office." He was connected with the tannery before he became a preacher, though he may have continued the business whilst preaching (75).

While this does not establish that Sidney Rigdon had a permanent abode in Pittsburg, nor that he was connected with Patterson's printing establishment, it yet explains why seemingly everybody who knew him reached that conclusion. It also establishes beyond doubt his undeniable intimacy with Lambdin and Engles, and by reason thereof, his possible access to Spaulding's manuscript, and doubtless is one of the circumstances leading Spaulding to suspect Rigdon of the theft.

Rigdon Exhibits Spaulding's Manuscript.

It will be remembered that in 1822-23, Rigdon was a Baptist preacher in Pittsburg. The Rev. John Winter, M. D., one of western Pennsylvania's early preachers, was then (1822-3) a school teacher in Pittsburg. Dr. Winter died at Sharon, Pa., in 1878.

On one occasion during this period (1822-3) Dr. Winter was in Rigdon's study when the latter took from his desk a large manuscript, and said, substantially, that a Presbyterian minister named Spaulding, whose health had failed, brought it to a printer to see if it would not pay to publish it. "It is a romance of the Bible," Dr. Winter